DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

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TREASURER OF THE UNITED STATES MARY ELLEN WITHROW
INTRODUCTION OF 1996 SERIES CURRENCY
THE TREASURY DEPARTMENT CASH ROOM
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Good morning, and welcome to a very historic day here at the Treasury Department. I never thought that in my career I'd follow Ben Franklin. We're both on the money -- his picture, and my signature. I thought he had the better of the deal until I found out you had to be dead to have your picture on the currency. Thanks, but I'm not going to trade.

Before I go any further, I want to thank the National Portrait Gallery for lending us the historic portrait of Benjamin Franklin, the one from which the engraving for our $100 bill was made. I also want to acknowledge the important contribution of the National Academy of Sciences which conducted a counterfieting study for the Treasury Department.

In addition, I want to thank Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan for the Federal Reserve's assistance. The Federal Reserve ultimately underwrote the costs of the extensive research by the National Academy of Sciences and the testing that went into development of the 1996 series of currency. The costs of developing, testing and getting to the production stage of these bills totalled over three-quarters of a million dollars.

Today we are doing what administrations through two centuries have done -- acting to protect the stability and soundness of our financial system by further strengthing the security of our currency. That's what Secretary Mellon and Treasurers H.T. Tate and W.O. Wood were doing the last time a project of this scope was underaken -- protecting our currency.

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The production of the 1996 series of bills has been a major undertaking, conducted in cooperation with some of the top experts in the field of printing and counterfieting deterrence. The staff at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing have been working, I must say, under very heavy security and secrecy to protect the integrity of this undertaking.

To give you an idea of the scope of this project, we have been ordering 1.2 million sheets of paper a week since the middle of August in anticipation of starting production of $100 bills. We will be printing and stockpiling these notes until well into the new year to make certain there are sufficient supplies to meet the demand when they are introduced. In 1929, when the 1928 design was introduced into circulation, the announcement spoke of the curiousity factor -- the need to produce enough to meet the extra demand caused because people wanted a bill just to see what it looks like. Because of the world-wide acceptance of our currency, we will stockpile enough to meet both the regular demands of commerce and the curiosity factor.

By way of comparison, there was $5 billion of U.S. currency in circulation back in 1929. Today, there is more than $380 billion in paper currency circulating, about two-thirds of it overseas. Initially, we are printing the 1996 series $100 bills here at the facility in Washington, and as time goes by and as we start introducing notes of lower denominations, we will also begin printing the bills at our facility in Fort Worth, Texas.

In closing, I want to underscore a point: none of the money now in circulation will be recalled as a result of the introduction of the new bills, none. Both the currencies will be in circulation and both will be good.

Thank you.

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